

# **NASA/Marshall Space Flight Center Cooperative Education Program Working Agreement**

This agreement constitutes a basis of understanding between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC), Alabama, and the academic community concerning their mutual responsibilities in a Cooperative (Co-op) Education Program and its administrative details. This agreement provides a direct relationship with the appropriate educational institution and eliminates direct involvement of students in establishing the framework of the relationship. In addition, this agreement sets forth the program's purpose and objectives and states requirements for their attainment.

## **Program Purposes and Objectives**

### **Purpose**

1. To provide study-related work experience for students pursuing associate, baccalaureate, and graduate curricula in subject matter fields useful to NASA where work experience being a prerequisite for the degree.
2. The Co-op Program provides a resource for potential employment with NASA following the successful completion of the program and graduation from college.

### **Objectives**

1. To provide qualified college students with supervised, on-the-job learning experience in subject matter fields related to their academic majors.
2. To provide a variety of occupational experiences to assist students in determining the professional fields for which they may be suited.
3. To acquaint students with NASA's mission, program, and major projects in space and aeronautical research, development, and professional administration.
4. To provide learning and employment opportunities for qualified students without regard to age, race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
5. To establish and/or strengthen relationships between MSFC and the academic community to ensure mutual reinforcement between college curricula and the world of work.

## **The Cooperative Education Program**

The MSFC Co-op Education Program consists of a series of planned work assignments performed in laboratories, offices, and other related work areas, alternating with periods of

related academic study. It is designed for qualified students in the fields of science, engineering, professional administration, and other occupational fields. Work assignments are designed to prepare students for entry into career positions after successful completion of the program and graduation. While on the job, Co-op students perform duties in or related to their field of study and will work under the guidance of qualified MSFC personnel. Difficulty and responsibility of the work will vary with the grade level of the position. While successful completion of the program and graduation from college are prerequisites for appointment to permanent positions, such appointments are not guaranteed. MSFC's manpower needs, the availability of position vacancies, and a recommendation by the employing organization are determining factors for conversion not later than 120 calendar days after completion of the Co-op Program.

## **Program Admission Requirements**

1. Associate students must be full-time enrollees pursuing an associate's degree. The candidate must maintain at least a 2.9 overall grade average on a 4.0 scale, or the equivalent.

Baccalaureate students must be full-time enrollees pursuing a bachelor's degree. Completion of one full year of academic study is strongly recommended. The candidate must maintain at least a 2.9 overall grade average on a 4.0 scale, or the equivalent.

Graduate students must be enrolled in a curriculum leading to a master's or a doctorate degree on a substantially full-time basis (usually at least nine semester credit hours or the equivalent) and must be pursuing a major field of study related to the job for which he or she is being considered. The candidate must maintain at least a 2.9 overall grade average on a 4.0 scale, or the equivalent.

2. Candidates must have an academic record predictive of graduation.
3. Candidates must be enrolled in the educational institution's Co-op Education Program and must be recommended for the Co-op assignment by an authorized staff official of the institution.
4. Candidates must be U.S. citizens. The restrictions on employment of relatives described in 5 U.S.C. § 3110 must be applied when appointing Co-op students. That restricts a student from working in the same agency with a relative if there is a direct reporting relationship and/or the relative is in a position to influence or control a student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement to a position within the agency.
5. Candidates must be at least 16 years of age upon entry into the program and pass a security investigation.

## **How to Apply**

Students who express interest in applying for Co-op vacancies within NASA MSFC are required to apply through their school's Co-op Office or Career Services Office.

The Co-op Office at each school will continue to be responsible for making sure the student has

met all requirements of the MSFC Co-op Program and that the student has registered through the school's Co-op Office prior to submitting a resume to MSFC. The student will still be required and instructed to have an official transcript and letter of recommendation submitted to MSFC's Co-op Office immediately following submittal of his or her resume. The student's resume (hardcopy), official transcript (hardcopy), and letter of recommendation (hardcopy) will be required in order to be considered for a MSFC co-op vacancy through the MSFC Co-op Program. The official transcript and letter of recommendation should be sent to the following address:

NASA MSFC  
Attn: HS30/Chrissa Hall  
Academic Affairs Office  
Marshall Space Flight Center, AL 35812.

You may include any other related information that would be beneficial in the evaluation process. An OF612 is no longer required.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Marshall Space Flight Center will—**

1. Maintain a liaison with the educational institution through its Co-op Education Coordinator.
2. Keep the educational institution informed of work experience opportunities in a timely manner.
3. Select appointees from among those recommended and referred by the educational institution. Such selection shall disregard age, race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
4. Process all personnel actions relative to the employment of Co-op students.
5. Ensure that students are supervised and counseled during their work periods by competent professional personnel.
6. Ensure that work assignments are related to the academic majors being pursued by students and collaborate with the institution in setting up work schedules to accommodate assignments.
7. Furnish supervisory evaluations of student work performance to the educational institution at reasonable intervals, or upon request.
8. Notify the educational institution of any proposed action to terminate a student's appointment because of failure to perform at an acceptable level, an unauthorized change of major, or misconduct.
9. Maintain records on student performance and other matters, including promotions, change in student status, and grade reports (course titles, number of credit hours, and grades) after the conclusion of each school term.

## **The educational institution will—**

1. Designate an official to act as the Co-op Education Liaison with MSFC.
2. Inform prospective candidates of MSFC's Co-op education opportunities.
3. Recommend only students who are enrolled in the institution's Co-op Education Program, including all honorably discharged veterans, and who have shown strong ability and potential in the fields of MSFC's interests and needs, and who plan to complete academic work leading to a degree. Students shall be recommended without regard to age, race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
4. Coordinate on-the-job training and academic education to ensure that the student obtains maximum benefit from their Co-op education experience, and inform the MSFC coordinator of any proposed change in the student's major field of study.
5. Keep the MSFC coordinator informed of any change in student status and furnish copies of all grade reports (including course titles, number of credit hours, and grades) after the conclusion of each school term.
6. In collaboration with the MSFC coordinator, set up an annual schedule of alternating work-study periods tailored to the needs and availability of each student and endeavor to ensure that each student adheres to the schedule. Inform the MSFC coordinator, in a timely manner, of any impending changes.
7. As needed, furnish the MSFC coordinator any releasable data and information about the appointee(s).

## **Appointment**

1. Students are appointed under the following authorities provided in the Code of Federal Regulations:

**Baccalaureate Section 213.3202 (B)—BA/BS Graduate  
Section 213.3202 (B)—GRAD/PROF Associate Section  
213.3202 (B)—ASSOC.**

2. All appointments are for the full period beginning with the date of initial appointment to a date not to exceed 120 days after completion of degree requirements as required by Executive Order 12015, as amended by Executive Order 13024. There are no provisions for exceptions. The 120-day period commences upon the student's satisfactory completion of the school's educational requirements needed for graduation and completion of the minimum MSFC work hour requirements.
3. Initial appointments will be made as follows:

**Associate Program (Secretarial)**—Initial appointments will be made at the GS–2 or GS–3 level depending on each candidate's academic progress. The maximum grade level for the program is GS–4.

**Baccalaureate Program**—Initial appointments will be made at the GS–3 through GS–6

level depending on candidate qualifications. The maximum grade level for the program is GS-6.

**Graduate Program—** For master's degree candidates, initial appointment of professional administrative graduate Co-op students will be at the GS-7 or GS-9 level depending on an individual's qualifications. Doctoral degree professional administrative candidates, who have completed requirements for a master's degree, may be appointed at the GS-9 level.

Initial appointment of all master's degree engineering candidates will be at the GS-7 level. Doctoral degree engineering candidates, who have completed requirements for a master's degree and who otherwise meet Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Position Qualification Standards or qualification requirements for NASA's Aerospace Technology positions, will be appointed at the GS-9 level.

## **Probationary Period**

The student's first two years are considered a probationary period during which strengths and weaknesses are observed and assessed. Students who fail to meet MSFC performance standards or who show no promise for successful career service will be terminated during this time for any reason or at anytime. Indications that the student should not continue in the program include, but are not limited to, the following: failure to maintain a GPA of 2.9; unauthorized change of curriculum or change of major; failure to submit reports in a timely fashion; disrespectful attitude; unethical conduct; suspension, expulsion or withdrawal from the educational institution. Students can still be terminated beyond the two year probationary period for misconduct or poor job performance.

## **Work Schedules**

1. Schedules will involve alternating periods of full-time study and full-time work (except in rare situations when MSFC authorizes part-time work because of the nature of the assignments) while on the program and will continue until the student graduates from college. Certain exceptions may apply if a student has completed a minimum of three semesters in work status and is at the senior level, since senior level classes may only be offered at certain times of the year.
2. Work periods may include summers but must not be restricted to summers.
3. Schedules must ensure that students will have the required hours and periods of employment necessary for noncompetitive conversion upon graduation.
4. Intermittent employment on an indefinite schedule is not creditable as Co-op education experience and will not be permitted.
5. Schedules must ensure that associate students will not be in an employee status for more than 2.5 years of their co-op appointment.
6. Schedules must ensure that undergraduate, graduate, PHD students not be in an employee status for more than five years from their initial co-op appointment.

7. Students last work period must be within two years of their anticipated graduation date.
8. Students Leave w/out Pay (LWOP) status cannot exceed a year and a half (18 months) while on the co-op program.

## Pay and Benefits

1. **Pay Schedules**—Students will be paid in accordance with the regular pay schedules established for their grades and will receive payment for any authorized overtime. The following table describes the academic requirements needed to qualify for initial appointment.

### ASSOCIATE AND BACCALAUREATE STUDENT TRAINEES Academic Qualifications for Initial Appointments

#### Clerical and Technician Student-Trainee Positions

Grade	Level of Education
GS-1	High school student
GS-2	High school graduate/equivalent
GS-3	Complete 1 year of study post high school
GS-4	Complete 2 years of study post high school

#### Scientific, Engineering, and Professional Administrative Student-Trainee Positions

Grade	Level of Education
GS-4	College sophomore
GS-5	College junior
GS-6	College senior
GS-7	Entry master's program or college graduate
GS-9	Doctorate program or completion of 1 year of master's-level study
GS-11	Doctorate program (research) or completion of 1 year of doctorate-level study

2. **Leave Without Pay (LWOP)**—Students will be placed in an LWOP status when not in a pay status.
3. **Tuition Assistance**—Payment in the amount of \$2,000 per academic year per student for tuition and lab fee's is sponsored by MSFC for students pursuing associate, baccalaureate and graduate degrees.
4. **Travel Costs**—MSFC will not pay for travel to and from the job.
5. **Medical Insurance**—The Government sponsors a voluntary health insurance program offering a choice of insurance plans including basic coverage and major medical protection. The Government contributes part of the premium cost and the student pays the balance through payroll deductions when in a work status. During a non-pay status, payment should

be made by check payable to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

6. **Life Insurance**—Regular term life insurance is automatic, unless waived. Two kinds of insurance are provided—life insurance and accidental-death and dismemberment insurance—in an amount that is usually at least \$2,000 more than annual base pay. The Government pays one third of the premium cost and the student pays the remainder through payroll deductions. In addition, the student may purchase extra optional insurance for which full premium must be paid through payroll deductions.
7. **Medicare Insurance**—Students are subject to the Medicare hospital insurance portion of the social security (FICA) tax. This coverage was extended to Federal employees as a result of the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982.
8. **Retirement**—Co-op students are subject to the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). Co-op students hired since December 3, 1983 will be covered under FERS. FERS is a three-tiered plan that includes a retirement annuity, Social Security, and a thrift savings plan (TSP).
9. **Annual Leave**—Annual leave is earned according to the number of years in Federal service (civilian plus creditable military service). The maximum accrual rates are 13 days a year for the first 3 years and 20 days a year for the next 12 years. After 15 years, employees earn 26 days of annual leave each year. Unused annual leave can be accumulated (up to 30 days) and carried forward from one year to the next.
10. **Sick Leave**—Sick leave is earned at the rate of 13 days a year. This leave can be used for illness and for appointments with a doctor, dentist, or optician. There is no limit on the amount of sick leave that can be accumulated for use in succeeding years.
11. **Holiday Provision**—Students are paid for holidays that fall within their work periods.

## Employment and Graduation

Within 120 days after graduation, MSFC may convert, noncompetitively, any Co-op education student, who receives an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degree and who satisfies the eligibility requirements cited below, to a career, career-conditional, or term appointment.

1. Conversion must be effected within 120 days after graduation or the student will be terminated.
2. Although the prime purpose of Federal employment of Co-op education students is to prepare students for the Agency's permanent work force, the Agency sometimes cannot, for administrative reasons, noncompetitively convert all Co-op graduates it has trained as students or cannot convert at the grade for which a person is eligible. Students who are not converted may seek eligibility through the competitive process in the same or another area of work. The MSFC coordinator will refer the credentials of student trainees, who are not offered permanent positions by MSFC, to other NASA installations for consideration. Student trainees who do not meet the requirements for noncompetitive conversion may also seek eligibility at that level through the competitive system.

## Conversion Grade-Level Requirements

## **Associate Secretarial Program**

A secretarial student is eligible for noncompetitive conversion at the GS-4 level if he or she—

- Meets the qualification standards for the position at the GS-4 level, except for any written test.
- Has a minimum, cumulative (overall) GPA of at least 2.9.
- Still meets the citizenship requirement and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Has completed three or more Co-op work terms in a pay status at MSFC. (Reminder – not limited to summers only) Recommend at a minimum, one summer, one fall and one spring Semester.

## **Baccalaureate Program**

A baccalaureate student is eligible for noncompetitive conversion at the GS-7 level if he or she—

- Meets the qualification standards for the position at the GS-7 level.
- Has a minimum, cumulative (overall) GPA of at least 2.9.
- Still meets the citizenship requirements and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Has completed three or more Co-op work terms in a pay status at MSFC. (Reminder – not limited to summers) Recommend at a minimum, one summer, one fall and one spring Semester.

## **Graduate Program**

A graduate student is eligible for noncompetitive conversion if he or she—

- Receives the graduate degree and still meets the citizenship requirement and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Has a minimum, cumulative (overall) GPA of at least 2.9
- Has completed two or more Co-op work terms in a pay status at MSFC. (Reminder – not limited to summers) Recommend at a minimum, one summer, one fall and one spring Semester.
- Satisfies the qualification requirements for conversion at grades GS-9 for completion of a master's degree and GS-11 for a doctorate degree.

## **Helpful Web Sites**

**NASA Headquarters Web site:** <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/>

**MSFC Web site:** <http://www.msfc.nasa.gov/>

**MSFC Co-op Web site:** <http://coop.msfc.nasa.gov>

**Alabama Web site:** <http://www.alabamainfo.com/>

**Huntsville, Alabama Web site:** <http://www.huntsville.org/>



## Conditions of Agreement

1. The conditions of this agreement are in conformity with existing Federal regulations. However, it is understood that they, at no time, supersede, alter, or take the place of such regulations. Any change required by new or revised laws or regulations shall be automatically effective. Changes that are not required by new laws or regulations will be made only by mutual consent of this Agency and the institution.
2. This agreement becomes void if there have been no students from the educational institution employed by this Agency within the preceding 12 months.
3. This agreement will remain in effect until such time that the Agency and/or the institution wish to terminate it.

## Signed

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Institution's Representative

Date Signed

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Title

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Name of University/College

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Address Street

City

State

Zip Code

---

Area Code/Telephone Number

---

E-mail Address

---

MSFC Representative

Title

Date Signed

NASA Marshall Space Flight Center

Academic Affairs Office

HS30/Chrissa Hall

E-mail [chrissa.k.hall@nasa.gov](mailto:chrissa.k.hall@nasa.gov)

